Linguistic Diversity

Questions&Answers Google Doc

Bachelor Computerlinguistik

This is a Google Doc for you to self-organize questions and answers for the topics we read about / are covered in class for the Linguistic Diversity course. Feel free to put questions here, and answer your fellow students’ questions too. If you provide answers, it’s helpful to reference the readings/lectures or other material that speaks to answering a question. Feel free to add your names too.

1. **Class What is (a) language? Comrie (2009) Introduction**

AV: What is the problem with the question, “how many languages are there”?

AV: Which of the following is a claim based on typological classification, rather than other types of classification/study? Please state for each claim why it is / isn’t a typological claim. (see Vellupilai p. 19-23)

a)     If a language has a nominal marker for definiteness, this is most likely to be a definite word distinct from a demonstrative.

b)   The languages of Australia can be divided into two groups: Pama-Nyungan and non-Pama-Nyungan.

c)     Consonant inventories in Africa range from 8 to 122.

d)    Hindi is the third most-spoken language of the world, with over 500 million speakers.

e)     The cross-linguistic distribution of noun-relative clause word order can at least in part be explained by heaviness constraints.

f)     French has post-nominal relative clauses.

1. **Class Phonological typology Velupillai (2012) Chapter 4**

 AV: Which vowel inventory is typologically most common? If I presented you with 10 languages with such a vowel inventory, would  you expect these 10 languages to belong to the same language family (i.e. to be genealogically related)? Why or why not?

Velupillai: Why are length, tone and stress called suprasegmental features?

AV: Is the following statement true or false? Motivate your answer:

Change in the phoneme inventory occurs through language-internal processes only, and is

unaffected by non-linguistic influences

1. **Class Morphological typology Velupillai (2012) Chapter 5**

AV: Modern English has a more fixed word order than Old English. What is a possible explanation for this change?

Velupillai: Which of the words below would you call a synthetic one and which a polysynthetic one?

Why?

Mamaindê (Nambikuaran (Nambikuaran): Brazil) (Eberhard 2009: 345, 350)

*ja̰k-ã-oʔ-thũ-tu*

peccary-gen-pound-ncl.powder-fns

‘pounded meal of peccary and manioc’

*nũsa-jahon-nãʔã-nu-tu*

poss1.pl-old.men-pl-fut-fns

‘our old men in the future’

1. **Class Word classes and lexical typology Velupillai (2012) Chapter 6**

AV: Assign each word in the following examples to one of the part-of-speech categories: noun (N), verb (V), adjective (Adj), article (Art), adverb (Adv), preposition (Prep), subordinator (Sub), coordinator (Co). Are there any words you can’t classify using these categories?

i She lives in Moscow.

ii The dog was barking.

iii Sue and Ed walked to the park.

iv I met some friends of the new boss.

1. **Class Word order and linguistic universals Velupillai (2012) Chapter 10**

1. **Class Nominal categories Velupillai (2012) Chapter 7**

1. **Class Verbal categories Velupillai (2012) Chapter 8**

1. **Class Clausal syntax/grammatical relations Velupillai (2012) Chapter 9**

Find below a set of sentences in west Greenlandic.

1. How are grammatical relations marked in this language? Through case marking (dependent marking), person/number/gender agreement on the verb (head marking), constituent order, or some combination of those three? **Be sure to indicate how you reached your conclusions (refer to examples).**
2. If you find there is head or dependent marking of grammatical relations in A., what is the alignment? **Describe your reasoning in detail, make reference to specific examples.**

1. marie-p atuagaq atuar-paa

marie-REL book read-3SG>3SG

'Marie read the book.'

1. meeqqa-ni   uan-nut paari-qqu-aa

child.POSS-REFL 1SG-ALL look.after-ask.to-3SG>3SG

'She asked me to look after her child.'

1. meeqqa-p atuagaq atuar-paa

child-REL book read-3SG>3SG

The child read the book.

1. meeraq qia-voq

child cry-3SG

The child is crying.

1. meeqqa-t tunissut-inik pisini-up-pakka

child-PL present-INS.PL buy-VAL-1SG>3PL

I bought presents for the children.

1. arnaq putu-kkut nakkar-poq

woman hole-PRO fall-3SG

The woman fell through the hole.

1. **Class Methods of historical linguistics Campbell (2004) Chapter 5**

1. **Class Explanations of linguistic diversity Nettle (1998)**

1. **Class Cognitive linguistics and linguistic relativity  Evans & Green (2006) Chapter 3**

1. **Class  Language birth, death, and revitalisation Nettle & Romaine (2000) Chapter 1**

**Students’ Answers**

(I moved them down here, separately from the tasks so that the other students don’t get a spoiler on the exercises unless they want that.)

**Class What is (a) language? Comrie (2009) Introduction**

**AV: What is the problem with the question, “how many languages are there”?**

**Answer:**

It’s difficult (and sometimes impossible) to decide if two speech varieties are different languages or dialects of the same language. Often our current classification (e.g. in Europe) is more strongly influenced by social and political factors rather than linguistic factors.

The main criterion for deciding linguistically is mutual intelligibility but this has several problems:

- it can be contradictory because you can have dialect chains, where adjacent dialects are mut. int. but the ends are not

- it is a matter of degree, there is no clear line to decide on

- int. gets better with exposure to the language and you can also have one-way intelligibility

- can be social & psychologically influenced, you can understand someone better who you *want* to understand

- lots of languages are on the verge of extinction

**AV: Which of the following is a claim based on typological classification, rather than other types of classification/study? Please state for each claim why it is / isn’t a typological claim. (see Vellupilai p. 19-23)**

a)     If a language has a nominal marker for definiteness, this is most likely to be a definite word distinct from a demonstrative.

→ Yes. It is a implicational unidirectional statistical universal.

b)   The languages of Australia can be divided into two groups: Pama-Nyungan and non-Pama-Nyungan.

→ No. This is a genealogical classification.

c)     Consonant inventories in Africa range from 8 to 122.

→ No. Typological classification must be cross-linguistic, i.e. compare languages.

d)    Hindi is the third most-spoken language in the world, with over 500 million speakers.

→ No. This is a demographic classification.

e)     The cross-linguistic distribution of noun-relative clause word order can at least in part be explained by heaviness constraints.

→ Yes. It is a claim of a cross-linguistic comparison. (Unsure)

f)     French has post-nominal relative clauses.

→ Typological classification has to be cross-linguistic, i.e. compare languages.

1. **Class Phonological typology Velupillai (2012) Chapter 4**

 AV: Which vowel inventory is typologically most common? If I presented you with 10 languages with such a vowel inventory, would  you expect these 10 languages to belong to the same language family (i.e. to be genealogically related)? Why or why not?

**Velupillai: Why are length, tone and stress called suprasegmental features?**

They carry over/accross segments, that means they don’t just affect single segment but rather sequences of segments (e.g. stress can only be seen in an entire word as opposed example vowel quality which affects just the segment of the vowel)

AV: Is the following statement true or false? Motivate your answer:

Change in the phoneme inventory occurs through language-internal processes only, and is

unaffected by non-linguistic influences